

## **The Roles of the Counties and State in Wisconsin's Child Protective Services System**

The system of social services in Wisconsin includes child protective services. "Child protective services" denotes the system of protecting children from abuse or neglect. It includes all aspects of the process for assuring safety for children, from the time that a report of alleged maltreatment is made through the closing of the case. It also includes all children and families receiving such services, whether those services are voluntary or under the aegis of a court order.

Primary responsibility for providing these services lies with the designated county department (except in Milwaukee County where the state has directly assumed responsibility). Wisconsin Statutes grant to counties the authority:

To investigate the conditions surrounding . . . children in need of protection and services . . . within the county and to take every reasonable action within its power to secure for them the full benefit of all laws enacted for their benefit. [Ref. s. 48.57(1)(a), Wisc. Stats.]

To provide appropriate protection and services for children . . . in its care, including providing services for those children and their families . . . in their own homes, placing those children in licensed foster homes, treatment foster homes or group homes . . . [Ref. s. 48.57(1)(c), Wisc. Stats.]

While the county has the primary responsibility for the provision of services, the Department of Health and Family Services ". . . shall supervise the administration of social services . . ." [Ref. s. 46.206(1)(a), Wisc. Stats.]

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) reviews county case records in accordance with Department powers, duties, and authorities under ss. 46.03(7)(a); 46.03(25); 46.206(1)(a) to (c); 48.48(1), (2) and (16); 48.59(2); and 48.981(3)(c), Wisc. Stats.; and Section 2.01 of the "State and County Contract Covering Social Services and Community Programs." Taken in their entirety, these references describe Wisconsin's state-supervised/county-administered system of child welfare services.